Lives in the Balance and People Under Fire: Rynn, Preeti, and That Kiss

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Characters:	Rynn Zenat, Preeti Delmin, Luke Skywalker, Kes Dameron, Jarek Yeager, Therisa Alern
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by lefemmerouge2

Summary

The first thing you need to know is I died. I really died. Definitely. I've almost died so many times before. But, this time there was a fiery explosion. My lovely Rynn was gone. Her ship was blown up in front of my very eyes. Next I thing I remember, I was aboard a Star Destroyer and in a holding cell. Some Imperial Officer freed me and I learned that my precious love had somehow survived! I couldn't contain my feelings. I smooched her with so much intensity. Nothing else mattered. Then some damn stormtroopers almost killed both of us, and our friends. This is my story, the kiss that changed everything, and what came next...

Notes

Happy May 6th! Today is International No Diet Day. This is cross-posted on Squidge World and may later be cross-posted elsewhere. It is the first-ever fic to feature Rynn Zenat and Preeti Delmin on here. This fic was originally posted on Cosmonautics Day, the day Yuri Gagarin became the first human in space in 1961. It is celebrated elsewhere as "Yuri's Night." Hope you all enjoy this fic, which was once exclusive to another site but is no longer.

As I noted in my fic, "The Scarlet Queen, the Wild Treasurer Hunter, and the Crimson Dawn" (which I highly recommend you read), I received the go-ahead to post this on a certain site and fics for characters within the Doctor Aphra series. I decided to create this because there are *no fics* on AO3 which have Preeti Delmin or Rynn Zenat as characters. In writing this, I thought immediately of a Jackson Browne song, "Lives In The Balance", and especially this part: "There are lives in the balance / There are people under fire / There are children at the cannons / And there is blood on the wire." It's in his classic 1986 album "Lives In The Balance". So, I included some of that in the title.

This story focuses on when Rynn and Preeti kiss in the middle of an intense laser battle with stormtroopers. Some of my tags on that posting are: "#girls kissing girls #in the middle of a battle!...#lesbians gotta kiss I guess #even if they are almost killed by laser fire #homophobic stormtroopers?" Much of the dialogue in that section of the story comes from the scene itself. I made up a scene where they talk on the way back to the base, as the comic's next issue has Luke and Rynn on Lehanis, a swamp planet in the Outer Rim, but Preeti isn't there!

To give some background, last year, I bought the trade paperback, "Star Wars: Battle of Jakku," which, as Wookieepedia describes it, is a "trade paperback collection of the three limited series of the same name published by Marvel Comics," specifically Star Wars: Battle

of Jakku — Insurgency Rising (2024) #1-4, Star Wars: Battle of Jakku — Republic Under Siege (2024) #1-4, and Star Wars: Battle of Jakku — Last Stand (2024) #1-4. It is set "between "Return of the Jedi" and "The Force Awakens". It tells the story of the Galactic Civil War "after the Battle of Endor leading up to the Battle of Jakku." Some information for this fic came from the following Wookieepedia pages: "Adelhard coalition," "Scepter (Imperial-class)," "Adelhard's fleet," "Ubrik Adelhard's Imperial remnant," "Kith Alaytia," "Reyna Oskure," "Rebel flight suit," "Bragh," "Therisa Alern," and "Ubrik Adelhard," plus those I mentioned earlier.

This fic's summary is loosely inspired by the beginning of the Star Wars: Doctor Aphra script by Sarah Kahn. In addition, the summary is from Preeti's perspective. I'd say that Preeti counts as a Black character. It is notable that the author, Alex Segura, of "Star Wars: Battle of Jakku", also wrote all the "Star Wars" series last year, along with other works. He is likely straight, but that does not detract from the story.

Comments, and constructive criticism, are welcome and appreciated.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by Battle of Jakku: Insurgency Rising #1 - "Last Resorts" (2024) [seven panels] by Alex Segura, Leonard Kirk, Rachelle Rosenberg
- Inspired by Star Wars #3 - "Complications" (2025) [five panels] by Alex Segura, Phil Noto
- Inspired by Free Comic Book Day 2025: Star Wars 1 Thoughts by classicanalyzer
- Inspired by Battle of Jakku: Insurgency Rising #1 - "Last Resorts" (2024) [14 panels] by Alex Segura, Leonard Kirk, Rachelle Rosenberg
- Inspired by Battle of Jakku: Last Stand #1 - "Wronged & Reborn" (2025) by Alex Segura, Jethro Morlaes, Jim Campbell
- Inspired by Battle of Jakku: Republic Under Siege #2 - "The Vengeance Gambit" (2024) [six panels] by Alex Segura, Stefano Raffaele, Alex Sinclair
- Inspired by Doctor Aphra, Luke Skywalker, and Rynn Zenat in Star Wars: The Battle of Jakku - Republic Under Siege #2 by jewishcissiekj
- Inspired by Battle of Jakku: Insurgency Rising #1 (2024) variant cover by Declan Shalvey
- Inspired by That time Luke said he was "happy to see" Aphra [in Battle of Jakku: Republic Under Siege #2] by cleoinspace
- Inspired by Aphra comes to warn Luke and Rynn Zenat about something and Sailor Iron Mouse shows up out of *nowhere*, demanding their "Star Seeds," so they run away in fear by cleoinspace
- Inspired by Aphra warns Luke and Rynn and they run flee in fear after Sailor Galaxia declares that the galaxy is HERS and no one can stop her, while Aphra isn't sure whether she should ally with her or… run away by cleoinspace
- Inspired by When Aphra teased Luke that Jedi "hated fun" in the middle of a battle with a terrifying beast. by cleoinspace
- Inspired by Sana and Aphra wish you all a happy day! by cleoinspace
- Inspired by Lives In The Balance by Jackson Browne
- Inspired by Rynn Zenat by Wookieepedia
- Inspired by Preeti Delmin by Wookieepedia

She, Kes Dameron, Jarek Yeager, and Therisa Alern were part of a covert New Republic mission authorized by Mon Mothma, and approved by Leia Organa. It had the goal of gathering intelligence on the destructive, ruthless actions of Moff Ubrik Adelhard in the Anoat Sector. Previously, she had warned Luke Skywalker and Leia, who were, like the other Rebels, celebrating their victory over the Galactic Empire, about Adelhard's desperate attempt to restore the Empire. Despite her best efforts of her, and those of Kes, Jarek, and Therisa, including outmaneuvering spice runners, they had all been captured. They were brought aboard Adelhard's Star Destroyer flagship, the *Scepter*. He commanded scattered Imperial forces, smugglers, and others. Adelhard thought he had won. However, ISB Lieutenant Kith Alaytia, a woman who Therisa trusted, freed them. In reality, Kith was a spy for the Rebel Alliance and later the New Republic, although Adelhard was unaware of this treachery. The now-escape Rebels didn't get very far. A fearless, sadistic man named Bragh, an elite Imperial stormtrooper and commander, knocked them all out, with help from an Inquisitor, and Adelhard's wife, Reyna Oskure. When it seemed that all hope was lost, and they were about to be killed, Luke appeared.

He was able to knock out Reyna and Bragh, with some effort. He had an intense laser sword battle with the former. Seeing the danger he was in, one of those who been pushed to the ground, by Bragh, used her last strength to get up. Her bright orange shirt shined under the artificial light. It was covered by a brown military-issue jacket. Her outfit was completed with bluish cargo pants and heavy-duty practical black boots. Although she was still a bit groggy and out of it, she called out his name and warned him to look out. They were all surprised when Bragh was hit by a laser bolt. She heard a voice yelling, a voice which sounded so familiar to her. "Get away from them!" the person shouted. Then she saw her: a woman wearing the standard-issue orange flight fatigue. She held a blaster in her hands. She wore black thermal gloves and insulated boots, along with controls for the suit's systems. There were pockets for flares, an emergency transmitter, and other items, although those had been taken out of her suit when she was captured.

She was stunned when she saw the black-haired woman in front of her, her pale skin nearly sparkling under the light. "Rynn? Rynn, is that you? How...?" she said. She had thought that her beloved had been killed. She had kept replaying the scene in her head over and over. She paused. "I saw you...I saw you, blow up." Rynn nearly shouted back. "PREETI!?!" She couldn't believe this. It was all so overwhelming. She could barely think of what to say, so she said the first thing that came into her mind. "It's me. It's you." It was simple, but Preeti got the message. Her brownish face was illuminated by the artificial light. "You're *alive*." She still couldn't believe it. She had no intention of holding herself back.

She brought up her left hand, covered by a black glove, to Rynn's face, touching the bandage on the right side of her face, and staring into her brown eyes. Her other hand, her right hand, still held the blaster. She wouldn't let anyone, not even some damn stormtrooper, hurt the woman she loved. She would hate herself if that happened. Rynn placed her arms around Preeti's lower body in an almost hug. Their soft lips came together. Everything that was happening around them didn't matter. Their lips touched in such a sensual way that it made them both feel so happy and glad to be there together. What they were doing, which was so open and so blatant, was almost a form of resistance in and of itself. It stood against what

Adelhard had done to her, Rynn, and their squad. They had managed to survive, but they wouldn't let anyone stop them. They wished they could stay like this forever, even in the middle of this tense situation.

Their comrades thought they were out of their minds. Who in the world would want to kiss in a situation like this? It wasn't safe, they felt. In contrast, Preeti and Rynn *did not care* about the risks of what they were doing. They were so overjoyed to see one another alive and breathing, after each one of them thought that the other had been blown apart to smithereens. There would certainly be some trauma from all that happened. Without a doubt. In that moment, that trauma temporarily faded away. They couldn't hold back their feelings. And why should they? What they felt for each other mattered above anything else. They'd never let anyone take that away from them, especially if they were troopers who were part of a dead, decaying empire that should be pushed into the dustbin of history forever. It wouldn't be coming back. That's how they felt. All that they cared about was expressing their feelings for one another. The battle raging around them was almost just background noise to both of them.

This time would not last. The sounds of laser bolts hitting above their heads caused them to almost be hit. Their embrace quickly ended. Preeti shouted, "Get down! Everyone take cover!" Rynn told her to "look out." Later, she handed Kes her blaster. She told him to use it wisely. He promised he would. She had a look of annoyance on her face. *How dare* those stormtroopers interrupt her precious moment with Rynn! It infuriated her. She, Kes, Therisa, and Jarek worked together to take down a squadron of stormtroopers. At one point, she declared, as she knocked out one trooper after he told her that the rebels had no idea what they had done, "We're the Republic now. *Don't you forget it*."

Preeti and Rynn couldn't believe they were alive. They were still thinking about their feelings, even in the middle of a laser battle! Jarek was happy for them, but said that they wouldn't be alive much longer if they didn't keep their eyes open. Somehow, Luke was able to win against Adelhard. They were all able to escape from the hangar bay with Reyna's arms bound, as a prisoner. While they had won the battle, they wondered if they had a chance to win the war. After all, Adelhard was a survivor who would do anything to be victorious. On their travel back to the New Republic fleet, Preeti revealed that an Imperial officer had freed her. Therisa said her name was Kith Alaytia. This peaked Preeti's interest.

"So, is she your girlfriend or something? Like a romance behind enemy lines? Is *that* why you trust her?" This was a question she never expected. She didn't know how to respond. She was an intelligence operative. She had been taught to *never* form romantic attachments with double agents or anyone providing you information. It could make things too complicated. Even so, she wasn't scared to get her hands dirty. She waved her hands back and forth and chuckled. "No, she isn't," she said, then followed it up, "but...I can't deny that...well, I guess she is attractive...if we were in different circumstances...then maybe..." Her voice trailed off. Rynn turned her head and looked at Preeti. She couldn't believe she was alive and on the same ship as her. It brought her so much joy. She couldn't stand it. She knew, however, that they'd *have to* talk about their kiss. For now, she was glad to be with her, rather than looking at her through a hologram.

No one brought up the kiss between Rynn and Preeti. This was partially because they didn't want to tell these women something which came across all of their minds: they had been *extremely reckless* and had almost been killed by laser bolts. They knew Preeti and Rynn were glad to see one another after they thought they witnessed each other's death. No one wanted to be a wet blanket, especially not in a situation like this. That would go against what the Rebel Alliance, otherwise known as the Alliance to Restore the Republic, and now known as the New Republic, stood for, after all. As the ship docked in the hangar bay, Jarek, Kes, and Therisa went their separate ways. Luke brought Reyna to a holding cell, where they could begin her interrogation, asking her about Adelhard's devious plans to reconstitute the Galactic Empire. Preeti and Rynn retired to the barracks set aside for pilots. They had been able to get a room together.

Taking off her brown leather jacket, Rynn felt a bit relaxed, while Preeti started to take off her pilot suit. In no time at all, and with such ease, she had changed into something more comfortable. "*That kiss* was wild, wasn't it," she began. Rynn nearly laughed. Were they going to talk about it? Perhaps they should. "Yeah it was. I've smuggled spice from the most dangerous places. I've been nearly killed by laser bolts...but I've *never* kissed someone in the middle of a battle with stormtroopers before." She took a deep breath. "It was *exhilarating*." Her girlfriend felt exactly the same way. She snickered. Some people saw Rynn as a woman who had Han Solo's smuggling bravado, the piloting prowess of Luke, and a fierce tenacity resembling Leia. She wasn't sure if all of that was totally accurate, but there was one thing she did know: their relationship was important to both of them. It wasn't something she just did on the side.

"When I saw your majestic B-Wing explode...I was horrified...I thought I had *lost you*, Preeti...I didn't know what to do with myself." Her girlfriend nodded. She threw her arms around Rynn. She felt so soft and warm. "I...felt the same way...when I couldn't see your X-Wing anymore...I was almost inconsolable." Tears streamed down her cheeks, with Rynn softly touching her brown hair and gently stroking it. They stayed in this close embrace for a while, as the minutes passed. They didn't know how long it had been. "I love you, Preeti. *I always will*." Her girlfriend could only say, "yeah I love you too...so much." They liked these times together. They didn't know how long it would last.

As they continued chatting, Rynn said, "I hope we get that Adelhard...he needs to pay for what he did." Preeti couldn't agree more. "I'd kill a stormtrooper if he ever tried to hurt you." She found that sweet, although she knew that there could be female stormtroopers too. This wasn't like what she had heard in the past, when all the stormtroopers were apparently called clones and were bred through a cloning process based on Kamino. Very little information was known and she guessed that the Empire had worked to cover it up. "Have you...heard of this Doctor Aphra person?" Her girlfriend shrugged. That name didn't really ring a bell for her. Then again, she mostly talked shop with the other pilots.

"So, she has a bunch of exes spread across the galaxy and...she even worked for Darth Vader according to what I've heard." Preeti wasn't sure what to think about this. *Who* even told her about it? "Where'd you hear that from?" Rynn nearly rolled her eyes. She sighed. "You know the smuggler, Sana...Sana Starros...she was venting to me about her." She put her hand on her face and grumbled. "She said she is pissed at her...but she still has feelings for her...and thinks she can't let her go...this Aphra woman...she really sounds like an...*interstellar*

disaster." Preeti laughed. She shook her head. "Well, I hope Sana or whoever can put her on *the right track*...so she can work for the New Republic."

Rynn completely agreed. She chuckled. "Well, if I do meet her someday...I hope it is under *good circumstances*." Her girlfriend nodded. The war certainly wasn't over, but what was left of the Empire had been scattered. The now-New Republic had a path to victory. They were confident that they could win. Rynn thought about exploiting the divisions on Adelhard's coalition to take them down. It was an idea she could certainly share with Leia and Mon, along with other leaders. She had already told them about Adelhard in the first place and they trusted her judgment. She was extremely grateful for that. What came next for her, Preeti, and the New Republic would certainly be written in the stars...

End Notes

I am cross-posting this from CFAA. I am eschewing the tags "+Modern Age (1986-Present)" and "[Star Wars: Battle of Jakku - 2024-2025]" (used Pre-Battle of Jakku instead).

Prior to completing this fic, I read a couple articles. One, in Them by Samantha Riedel (in July 2025), says that "...Star Wars #3, the latest in an ongoing series of canon stories from Dark Horse Comics taking place directly after Return of the Jedi...[has] a brief but exciting scene reaffirming a queer relationship between two recent additions to...Star Wars... [specifically a]...Rebel Alliance pilot Rynn Zenat...[and] her steadfast starfighter comrade Preeti Delmin. Before Rynn peels off to reconvene with Skywalker, the two tell one another “I love you” — the three little words every Star Wars fan loves to hear. First introduced in last year’s Star Wars: The Battle of Jakku — Insurgency Rising miniseries...Rynn and Preeti were confirmed to be queer women almost immediately after debuting; the comic’s first issue opened on a dramatic scene in which Rynn told Preeti she loved her before appearing to die in a fiery spaceship explosion. The two reunited with a kiss at the end of that story, and both made appearances in the follow-up limited series Last Stand." The article however does say something odd: "fans haven't seen direct confirmation that the two were in a romantic relationship until now" and adds that "if you’re one of those fans who can’t trust anything is canon until it’s spelled out, we get it, and also: eat up." How was it not directly confirmed? Something similar is stated by Amelia Hansford in PinkNews (since in the trash heap for being transphobic) in July 2025, claiming that only Star Wars #3 "confirmed" their relationship, which again is incorrect, although it does make a point that Rynn has appeared *more* than Preeti: "Rynn, a B-Wing starfighter for the Rebel Alliance, has appeared in 16 comic book issues since her debut in October [2024], while Preeti has appeared in nine issues." Writers like Ambrose Tardive (for ScreenRant) and Edge Media Network made the same errors. All of that was a further influence on this fic, with text in the Them and Edge Media Network certainly helpful in expanding this fic.

Otherwise, I was inspired by postings on Tumblr of Rynn and Luke (see here and here, Rynn fighting for the Rebellion/New Republic (see for example here and here) Rynn being captured, getting revenge (see here and here, Rynn and Preeti together (see here and here), and both of them kissing.

On Apr 8th, I received comments on my two existing fics, on CFAA, from the site owner, S.L. Walker, telling me I was overtagging, saying I should "just tag stories with things that are wholly either in the fic or deeply relevant to the fic." As such, I took a very minimalist tagging approach, removing tags for "spies," "minor character death," "Near Death Experiences," and "death." I am not bound by those tagging restrictions on here.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!